



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE-CHAIR
PATRICIA CURRY
JOYCE FAHEY
BRENDA GALLOWAY
LILY GRIEGO
PHALEN G. HUREWITZ
HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DAISY MA
ROBERT G. MCCAMAN
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
SANDRA RUDNICK
ADELINA SORKIN, CHAIR
REVEREND G. LIND TAYLOR
HARRIETTE WILLIAMS, Ed.D

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **September 8, 2003**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Carol O. Biondi
Joyce Fahey
Brenda Galloway
Lily Griego
Phalen G. Hurewitz
Helen Kleinberg
Daisy Ma
Robert McCaman
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Adelina Sorkin
Dr. Harriette Williams

Trinity Wallace-Ellis, Youth Representative

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused)

Patricia Curry
Sandra Rudnick
Rev. G. Lind Taylor

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the September 8, 2003 meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the August 18, 2003 general meeting were unanimously approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Chair Sorkin welcomed Joyce Fahey (4th District) and Brenda Galloway (5th District) to the Commission as new members.
- A draft of the FY 2002-03 Annual Report will be mailed to Commissioners within the week. All comments should be directed to the Executive Director.
- The Children's Planning Council will be hosting work sessions in each SPA to craft the specific recommendations with respect to health insurance, earned income tax credit, and permanency for children. These recommendations will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors by December 2003. Interested Commissioners should contact the Executive Director for more information.
- Chair Sorkin indicated that the psychotropic workgroup convened by Judge Nash continues to meet. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2nd.
- Chair Sorkin reported that on August 26, 2003, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion regarding the feasibility of developing an education council to meet the needs of foster youth. Recommendations are due to the Board in 90 days. Participants will include the Department of Probation, DCFS, Children's Law Center, the Commission, and other stakeholders. Chair Sorkin indicated that Commissioner Kleinberg will be attending the planning meeting of the council. Commissioners interested in attending should contact the Commission office.
- Chair Sorkin reported on the success of "For the Love of Children" event sponsored by Supervisor Antonovich. She acknowledged Commissioner Ma's contribution to the event.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The report submitted by Commissioner McClaney was presented. The slate of nominees is:

Chair: Commissioner Williams

Vice Chair: Commissioners Biondi, Ma, and Rudnick.

Elections of the Officers will take place on September 22, 2003.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Sanders indicated that the examination and subsequent recommendations regarding the static positions within the Department have been completed. He reminded the Commission that the goal is to increase the number of case carrying CSWs. Dr. Sanders stated that there are approximately 350 administrative management positions within the Department that will be reallocated to strengthen areas such as recruitment and kinship.

With respect to the static positions, the recommendation is for the reallocation of 250 staff. Dr. Sanders reviewed the programs that will remain as currently staffed, those programs with staff to return to case carrying positions, and staff to be moved at a future date. He emphasized that those areas which are aligned with the Department's priorities and lost staff through this process will ultimately receive the support necessary to carry out the critical function once the referenced administrative positions have been examined. Finally, Dr. Sanders reminded the Commission that the Union participated on this work

group and the recommendations are consistent with the memorandum of understanding between the Union and the Department.

Chair Sorkin asked if the WRAPAROUND staff to be reallocated are part of the public program. Mr. Oppenheim stated that these positions are part of the screening team working to determine whether referrals are appropriate for the WRAPAROUND program. He indicated that the public WRAPAROUND program was still in operation.

Commissioner Hurewitz asked Dr. Sanders to explain the rationale for the reallocation of RUM staff. Dr. Sanders stated that the committee found that there was inconsistency across regions with the use of staff. The recommendation is based on the belief that a reduction of staff will not impact the efficacy of the program. He added that there is a need to determine how services are authorized for children/youth by strengthening and augmenting the functions in program contract management and financial contract management.

Commissioner Kleinberg commented on the need for training of those staff who are returning to the line with special attention to education about specialized populations. Dr. Sanders agreed that training is a definite need and the Department is still formulating a plan on how this piece will be addressed. Commissioner Kleinberg then inquired about whether the Department is examining how it might fill some of the lost functions that serve specialized populations and/or how the needs of these populations will be met. Again, Dr. Sanders pointed to the administrative functions that will be examined and indicated that there is focus within the Department to determine how specific services are delivered to various populations.

Vice Chair Williams expressed her disappointment with the large reallocation of staff from the kinship division, as she believes that it devastates the program and the efforts that have taken place over the years in developing such a program. Additionally, she expressed her upset with what she described as an uncollaborative relationship, as Department staff assured her that the liaisons would not be transferred from the division. Dr. Sanders shared that the intent was not to decimate the program, rather that there needs to be some creative thinking about how the program grows and is strengthened. Critical for kinship providers is the receipt of services and the search for the appropriate provider at the outset of dependency services. He indicated the use of the CSA positions for this endeavor and believes that a plan can be developed quickly to ensure the program's continuity. Dr. Sanders assured Vice Chair Williams follow up to this issue.

Chair Sorkin asked how the Department will continue to supervise interns for licensure with the proposed changes. Trish Ploehn, Deputy Director explained that the internship program will not change; rather there will be changes to the way in which it is managed.

Commissioner Kleinberg urged that the Department evaluate the effectiveness of these plans over time with particular emphasis on the delivery of services to specialized functions.

NEW BUSINESS

California's Outcomes and Accountability: Dr. Fred Wulczyn stated that the intent of AB 636 (Steinberg) and the California Child and Family Service Review (Review) is to create an accountability system for the State with the shift of oversight to the local level. The focus of the oversight changes from the process of providing care to the outcomes resulting from the provision of service. The three outcome areas are safety, permanency, and child well-being. A stakeholder group was convened to develop outcome measures in these three areas. Implementation is planned for January 2004.

Dr. Wulczyn indicated that the process to measure the determined outcomes is similar to that of the Federal Child and Family Services Review; however many improvements to the tool were included. One element of the Review relies on statistical measures of performance for each county jurisdiction. The outcome measures for each county are then compared to understand which jurisdiction is experiencing success in a given area to provide an opportunity for other jurisdictions to apply that knowledge to their practice.

The second element of the review includes case readings to understand the quality and process of care to affect these outcomes. The third element requires that each county undergo a "self-assessment" to organize systemic change where appropriate. The "self-assessment" will include the development of stakeholder groups to examine the system at large and develop a plan in response to the information generated from the outcome measures.

During the first three-year phase of the Review, core indicators will be developed to communicate to counties about the overall state of their child welfare system, and how well they are doing in relation to the indicators. This information will then be used to initiate their 'self-assessment' and develop a system improvement plan.

Dr. Wulczyn stated that the Review creates a rationale for understanding outcomes within a Statewide context, and it tracks performance improvement over time using comparative assessments, baseline, and performance objectives. This he believes is the strength of the Review and will ultimately help counties improve their child welfare systems. Particularly for Los Angeles, it will allow the Department to track outcome measures for the various Service Planning Areas (SPA) to understand if services are more or less effective depending on the SPA in which the service is delivered.

Vice Chair Biondi asked if the Review provides Internet connections to allow care providers an opportunity for input. Dr. Wulczyn indicated that information would be available to the public. He reiterated the inclusion of a stakeholder group within the Review process.

Chair Sorkin inquired about the case readings with respect to the evaluation of service delivery that may be delayed for reasons outside of the CSWs control to gain a true understanding of the outcome measure. Dr. Wulczyn stated that case reviews will examine the decisions made on the case, the barriers encountered that prevent delivery of

service, and how that ultimately impacts the child. Then the challenge will be to understand how a particular case reflects on the larger population and areas that may need improvement.

Commissioner Kleinberg asked how the determination for choosing case will be made and will demographic information be generated. Dr. Wulczyn responded that the demographics will be generated and the specifics with respect to choosing cases from the various SPAS are still being determined.

Adoption Initiative: Trish Ploehn, Deputy Director, indicated that 11 workgroups were developed with the participation of internal and external stakeholders to examine the challenges toward timely permanency and to develop strategies to overcome them. The result of the Adoption Integration and Case Work Responsibility workgroup was the development of an ideal adoption process. Ms. Ploehn stated that the goal of the plan is to integrate all adoption work into to the regions. This she believes will shorten the time a child achieves permanency.

Ms. Ploehn indicated that for the plan to be successful there are several elements that must be in place: 1) one CSW for the life of the case; 2) implementation of concurrent planning; 3) implementation of consolidated home studies; 4) co-location of adoption staff in all regional offices with cases geographically assigned; 5) home studies completed within four months.

Diane Wagner, Assistant Division Chief, explained the rationale and process of the 120-Day Home Study Project. The Division is at its projected target for completing the backlog of home studies, and they will complete all of the 2,046 home studies identified for the project.

At the completion of the Home Study Project the Torrance Model will be implemented. Joe Prusak, ARA, explained that the Torrance Model was a pilot developed in response to the Department's difficulty with the assignment of cases, the delays with home studies and recruitment and poor communication and collaboration between regional and adoption CSWs. The Torrance Project provided an adoption CSW in the Torrance office that ultimately created a collaborative approach toward planning and ensuring timely permanency for children on the adoption track. Implementation of the Torrance Model will include training adoption SCSWs and designation of adoption staff to regional office. The designation of staff to the regional office will be a major challenge in the implementation phase as not all regional offices can accommodate an increase in staff.

Commissioner Fahey suggested that the court be involved in the development of the plan with respect to the timeline toward permanency. She indicated that often times there are delays within the court proceedings that can only be ameliorated and addressed by the court. Ms. Ploehn indicated that Judge Nash supports the plans as developed to this point and will assist as appropriate.

Commissioner Hurewitz congratulated the team on the success of the Home Study Project and the forethought given to potential barriers with respect to the timeliness of the adoption process. He suggested that training take place in the regional office for clerical staff about their impending responsibilities.

Trinity Wallace –Ellis emphasized the need to provide families with appropriate services at the front-end and suggested that there may be instances in which time frames set out by the court may need to be extended in order to increase the possibility of family reunification. Secondly, Ms. Ellis encouraged the inclusion of family members and other significant individuals in the team decision-making process to determine permanency options for the child.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals were present to provide public testimony.

Tammy Lanier expressed concern that the Department is moving toward “fast tracking” adoption for all children who come under the supervision of the Department. She further testified that adoption CSWs should have control over all cases in the adoption division, rather than the regional CSW.

Karen Ullman made several inquiries: 1) how co-location will take place throughout the regions as there are space constraints in many of the offices; 2) how TPR teams will be developed. Mr. Prusak of DCFS adoption unit responded that the co-location of staff will be determined on an office to office basis, with appropriate accommodations made specific to the needs of each office. With respect to the TPR component, Mr. Prusak suggested that plans are still being developed.

Yvonne Michelle Autry testified about the lack of services provided to parents toward family reunification. She further stated that “CSWs falsify reports and this prevents family reunification.”

Shirley Dixon Farrior provided testimony to advocate on behalf of families to receive the Department’s CSWs’ training manual.

Merritt Holloway suggested that prior to the development of new programs, the current programs provided by the county should be improved. Mr. Holloway also stated, “CSWs falsify court reports.”

Umasia L. Morris-Gaf testified that parents should receive due process both in court and by DCFS CSWs to reunify with their children. Additionally, she pointed out the need for CSWs to be culturally competent when working with families.

Bettye Anderson testified that the required training provided to families during the reunification period is not sufficient and/or adequate to help families gain the skills

needed for reunification. She further urged that foster homes be investigated since “some are not adequate and do not provide appropriate care to children.”

Warren Williams testified that DCFS is “fraudulent in providing protection for children under its supervision”. Further he believes that parents should receive due process during family reunification.

MEETING ADJOURNED